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Tel: +1 212 645 1111
Email: ussales@accartbooks.com
Web: https://www.accartbooks.com/us



Lightstream

Nigel Grierson

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- A new book from photographer Nigel Grierson, joint creator of the legendary 4AD visual identity
- Beautiful illusory photography, by way of long exposures

Lightstream represents Nigel Grierson's most recent foray into photographic abstraction as he makes long exposures of figures beside the light of the ocean. Taking the maxim from Dieter Appelt "A snapshot steals life that it cannot return. A long exposure (creates) a form that never existed", Grierson makes beautiful images, which on the surface might appear to owe as much to the medium of painting as they do to photography. However, it is important to him that these are un-manipulated images straight from the camera: "From the outset, my work has been largely about 'photographic seeing' as I'm fascinated by what Garry Winogrand so simply described as 'how something looks when photographed'. Hence, a sense of discovery within the work itself is very important to me; finding something new that I didn't already know. There's a huge element of 'chance, and the embrace of the happy accident within this approach, which is a sort of photographic equivalent of action painting. I'm often more interested in what something suggests rather than what it actually is, each image becoming a starting point for our imagination as it edges towards abstraction".

Yet what is unique about photography is that it always keeps something of the original subject. So there's a dynamic duality, a dramatic to and fro in the viewer's mind, between what it is and what it suggests. The marks and traces created by the moving light, at times have a simplicity like a child's drawings. On occasion, the residue of a human figure might be reduced to little more than their posture or demeanor, which then seems more significant than ever, a sort of essence, whether that be elusive or illusive.

Nigel Grierson is best known for the album sleeves and posters he designed and photographed (with his then partner Vaughan Oliver under the name 23 Envelope) in the '80s and early '90s, for the now legendary 4AD label (The Cocteau Twins, This Mortal Coil, Dead Can Dance etc.). The work has since appeared in many international exhibitions and periodicals and has been acclaimed by the likes of Rick Poyner and Catherine McDermott as among the most important and influential design of the Eighties. In the Nineties, Nigel went on to work with such artists as Tori Amos, Nine Inch Nails, Black, David Sylvian, and Lisa Gerrard, and he also began concentrating on the moving image. Around 2000, after a career directing music videos and TV commercials in both Europe and America, Grierson returned to his first love, photography. A series from his colour project 'The Transparency of Matter' was exhibited at The Craig Krull Gallery in Los Angeles, Spring 2007 and at Photo LA the same year. An overview of his work was published in the highly acclaimed monograph simply entitled 'Photographs' (Dewi Lewis Publishing) in December 2014, along with a one man exhibition at APT Gallery in London. His most recent projects challenge our preconceptions about the medium, pushing further into abstraction and the spiritual realm. His work has been exhibited in Japan, Europe and America, and is in the V&A collection in London.






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